

Project Winter Baskets
A Project that Combats The Effects of Education on Low-Income Communities

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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Abstract

Delaware County currently has the highest percentage of children living in poverty.¹ We researched and found an abundance of information on low-SES (socioeconomic status) schools and communities, and we have discovered some of the biggest needs in these schools are food, school supplies, warm clothes (gloves, hats, etc.), and books. Throughout our four years at Ball State, we have been immersed in schools and after school programs in and around Muncie, and we have seen first-hand these needs. Some students solely rely on school meals and books at school. During school breaks, a big concern among both teachers and ourselves is how students will eat, continue to read and learn, and even play outside in appropriate attire. Come time to write our honors thesis, we knew we wanted to give back to the community we had become a part of. We knew the basic facts, but we wanted to back ourselves with the research to truly make an impact. Therefore, we teamed up to research more about the effects of education on low-income communities. We put our research and creative to use and created Project Winter Baskets. We raised money to create roughly thirty baskets for students. These baskets included canned food, water, books, gloves, hats, school supplies, books, and anything else we can found to help these students during their time away from school

¹ Associated Press. (2017, March 20). Delaware County has highest child poverty statewide. Retrieved from <http://fox59.com/2017/03/20/delaware-county-has-highest-child-poverty-statewide/>

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Process Analysis Statement

This summer, with our senior year approaching, we began to think about our Senior Thesis. However, the more thought we put into it, the more we realized how great of an opportunity this was to actually make a difference. After spending the past three years immersed in the Muncie community, we grew to become very passionate about working with children living in low-SES areas. We learned about the importance of learning enrichment outside the classroom through our courses, and this led us to research and analyze the effects of living in low-SES communities can have on children to fulfill our thesis requirement. Two minds working together would mean we could partner and give something back to the community that has grown embedded in our hearts.

Our research on the needs of low-SES schools and communities gave us the idea to begin Project Winter Baskets to target children affected by poverty in the Muncie community. We raised enough money to create winter baskets for roughly 30 students. These baskets included things such as gloves, hats, books, school supplies, canned food, etc. These are all things research, and our own experience in Delaware County Schools over the past four years, have shown us students desperately need, especially over the breaks away from school.

After brainstorming multiple different ways to financially support the project, we decided to create a Go Fund Me² account and share the link on our individual Facebook pages. Not sure on how much money would be donated but hopeful because of the holiday season approaching, we were amazed when over \$300 was raised in one night.

² www.gofundme.com

Over the course of the next few weeks, Project Winter Baskets raised over \$610. People donated to our Go Fund Me page and our friends on Facebook shared the project over 100 times. The donations we received came from family members, friends, and even strangers. This was important to us because along with raising money, we were raising community awareness on this social and educational issue. Our hopes were that people would read and learn about this project's goals and get educated on this topic.

While we were filled with appreciation from the amount of donations we received, we were overwhelmed with gratitude from friends and family members who were once teachers in low SES communities and knew first-hand the types of items students would need. They were eager to support our mission and donated a variety of items, including food, books and school supplies, hats, body wash, diapers, wipes, baby blankets, toddler aged books and much more. These physical donations were a crucial part of this project and its success and one of the greatest outcomes was the ability to expand the age of children we were able to support. Our research has us initially targeting elementary aged children but after receiving so many donations, we were able to support all children and their families at Kidz Korner. This was a nice surprise to see how the physical donations were able to expand our project and its impact.

The planning process of buying necessities with donated money was most definitely a hurdle, with finding a way to deposit the Go Fund Me money completely separate from our personal bank accounts to avoid discrepancies. After considering several options, we decided to open a new debit card account through MasterCard Money Network that is specifically for this purpose. We linked the Go Fund Me to the

account for direct deposit because it allowed us to track each penny that was raised. On this new account, we were able to view exactly what was spent, where and when. This also provided documentation in case any of our donors requested a log of how their donations were spent.

We then began our pre-purchase planning and started by taking inventory of all the items we already had through physical donations. We sorted through all the bags and boxes of donations and grouped like items together. Next, we then created an excel document, recording the quantity of each item we already had and calculated how many of each item we needed for the baskets based on age, gender, and the number of children in a family. This tedious pre-purchase work was very important because it allowed us to make the most out of our money. We portioned more money for items that our research told us would be most beneficial in low-income homes, especially over winter breaks.

Another step in our pre-purchase planning was to find the very best deals. We did numerous hours of online research, calling stores, and calling managers. We wanted to get the most for our money and some stores were even willing to give discounts when we explained the project and its goals. The purchase of some items required us to drive to different stores, while others we had to time out just right and order in bulk online. All thanks to pre-planning, we were able to make maximum use from the money donated. Although our original goal for monetary donations had been \$2000 (this was based on an estimated cost of buying all necessary items) we were still able to buy everything and then some, while not even raising half this goal. We were

pleasantly surprised and proud that by the end of the project, all of the hard work and effort were able to assist a community and help students succeed in the classroom.

The next step was buying all the items. As we mentioned, we bought items from all around. We wanted to make sure we were making the most out of our money. We also never knew the hurdles that we were going to face in the buying process itself. One problem we ran into was there were not always enough items on the shelves, and we were left to check other stores or ask managers to check their back storage inventory. Diligence and patience was important in the buying process. We had to make sure we were keeping track of the price of each item, the quantity of each, and factor in that tax would be added on if we were not tax exempt. Lots of notes taken and calculations made. There was no room for error. Another task when buying so many items is making sure there are enough hands to push the full carts and load the car. We are thankful to have each other and our dear friends who volunteered their time to help us.

With all the planning and buying came another huge road block--storage. With lots of donations coming in, and needing to buy items incrementally and in advance, we needed a central place to gather everything and eventually put together the baskets. Luckily, I was able to clear out some space in the basement of my house and we were able to store items there. The piles, bags, baskets and boxes took up a good chunk of space, but each time I passed the items I could not help but smile, knowing that what was once just an idea, was turning into a reality.

The final step before delivery was to put the baskets together. Each family was going to be receiving either one or two laundry baskets filled with their items, depending on the family size. Since each item purchased was intentionally bought for a

developmental age range, we needed to come up with a practical system for sorting all the items out. We decided that the best plan would be to sort each item by family first, and then put it together all nice and neat at the end. We labeled each baskets with a sticky note. The sticky note had the family name and the number of children in the family, including gender and age. Then the sorting began. It took about a week to sort through all the items and make sure they were getting to the right child. There were twenty-five laundry baskets scattered around my basement in any nook and cranny we could fit them in. After all the items were sorted out, we spent several hours putting them together nicely. We wanted the families to feel special, getting to go home with a nicely presented basket. We also hand-wrote the family's name in beautiful calligraphy and tied the card on the front of the basket.

Once all baskets were complete and ready to go, we were left with one final things to do--the delivery. This part was probably the most difficult but most rewarding. Carrying all 25 laundry baskets filled with items up from my basement and out to the car was quite a task. Luckily, without a centimeter to spare, we were able to fit all 25 baskets into only 2 large cars. Ever so carefully, we drove over to Kidz Korner. Upon arrival, all the Kidz Korner staff was overjoyed to see it. A handful came out to help us carry in all the baskets. In the entryway of the building they have a waiting room type area that was decorated for Christmas and complete with a Christmas tree. We filled the waiting room with the baskets, all around the Christmas tree. The staff was so excited for families to see what was waiting for them.

Research

One thing affecting students' education living in low socioeconomic status (SES) communities is the lack of books and enriching literature activities and interactions within the household. Even though statistics show that having literature enhancing materials in the home is beneficial to students' reading skills, families in low socioeconomic status communities cannot afford to bring these materials into their homes. According to the American Psychological Association, "Children's initial reading competency is correlated with the home literacy environment, number of books owned, and parent distress. However, poor households have less access to learning materials and experiences, including books, computers, stimulating toys, skill-building lessons, or tutors to create a positive literacy environment."³ This not only affects students in their early years, but it can continue throughout their educational journey. Not only do low SES households have a lack of books and literature enhancing materials disproportionate to high-income households, but the children are also less likely to be read to.⁴ This is a daunting fact that is hindering their language development.

It is important for students to be engaged in their surrounding world as they are growing into adolescence. At this stage, students are becoming young readers. As young readers, it is essential that they need to become familiarized with letters and sounds through visual and auditory cues in their lives. "The research is clear: Children raised in homes that promote family literacy grow up to be better readers and do better

³ *Education and Socioeconomic Status*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/education.aspx>

⁴Ibid.

in school than children raised in homes where literacy is not promoted.”⁵ Most children tend to admire their parents for many things, including how they value reading and education. These values will transition into the family’s lifestyle. The family as a whole needs to be immersed in a literacy promoted environment. When children watch their parents read, or engage in family game nights that feature literacy, they get to apply their literacy skills and see just how important literacy is to daily life.

Second to the school or childcare, home is the number one place that children have the opportunity to be exposed to literacy. It can be as simple as reading the words on a cereal box while eating or reading the instructions on a box of macaroni and cheese. “Children who are read to at home are more likely to recognize the alphabet sooner. They can also count higher, write their own names, and read or pretend to read sooner.”⁶ Recognizing the letters of the alphabet is an absolute fundamental foundation of literacy and this lack of exposure will cause children’s chances of being able to read to dramatically decrease. “Cognitive skills are not fixed but can be influenced through investment in preschool training, education in school, and significantly, parental efforts. The most effective period for cognitive skill investment by parents is early on in the life of their children.”⁷ Even before a child begins school, being read to at home will put him/her at an advantage to do well and be ready for the rigger that school requires. Most schools currently adopt a curriculum that is literacy based. therefore, children that

⁵ Gorski, D. (n.d.). Promoting Family Literacy: Raising Ready Readers. Retrieved from <http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-literacy/promoting-family-literacy-raising-ready-readers>

⁶ Facts about Children's Literacy. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/grants/facts-about-childrens-literacy.html>

⁷ Kalb, G., & Van Ours, J. (2012). Reading to Young Children: A Head-Start in Life. Retrieved from <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/about/research/readtoyoungchild.pdf>

have the advantage of coming into school from a literacy-rich home experience will be more prepared than those without this experience.

During school, young readers are constantly surrounded by words, phrases, and phonemic sounds, this type of environment is vital. However, after they leave school, students are still vulnerable to learning and growing. It is important for parents, guardians, old sibling etc. to read aloud to young and emerging readers.

“When children see the adults around them using reading and writing in their everyday lives, they’re more likely to become readers and writers themselves.

Simply having a bookshelf full of books, reading the local newspaper, and having a notepad on which you write grocery lists and phone messages shows your child that reading and writing serve valuable everyday purposes.”⁸

Not only is it important to find these books, but it is important to show your child just how important reading is. As discussed, reading with your child, or reading yourself is one key way to show children how valuable literacy is. However, some parents work long hours, or have to travel a lot for work, and may not have as much time to read with their children. For these families, having a display area for your books and your child’s books shows the importance of reading.⁹ If you allow your child to damage their books or leave them laying on the floor, a book may become just another toy in their eyes. While it is important for reading to be fun and entertaining, especially at a young age, books should still hold higher value than toys in the home. Children may also feel a

⁸ How to Create a Literate Home: Young Child and Kindergartner. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-tips/how-to-create-a-literate-home-young-child-and-kindergartner/>

⁹ How to Create a Literate Home: Young Child and Kindergartner. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-tips/how-to-create-a-literate-home-young-child-and-kindergartner/>

sense of pride when they read these books that are valued and held high in a special area in the home.

This is also something teachers in Low Socioeconomic-Status schools can do. In most classrooms, there is a special place for books in either a classroom library or reading nook. However, if teachers are not provided with these resources due to a lack of supplies or funds, teachers should still display their books in some way. One way a teacher can do this is even just having the books lined up along the windowsill in the room. In Kaileigh's student teaching placement, she lined up Dr. Seuss books along the windowsill for Read Across America week. Her students were way more excited and interested in those books than any other books we have in the classroom, because they were displayed throughout the room.

While seeking out businesses or rummage sales that can offer a great deal for books for your child, books are still not the only way to bring literacy into the home. Alphabet blocks, foam bathtub letters, and magnetic refrigerator letters are all great items to have around the house to help build children's foundation in literacy.¹⁰ While some may think that only books with text in them are the only thing that will help their child learn to read, a solid foundation and familiarity with the alphabet at a young age is key to being able to read. If children have these materials at home, and manipulate with them in the bathtub or while waiting for mom to finish cooking dinner, they are unknowingly building that foundation and familiarity. They may not be able to put the alphabet in order, or they may not know what ever single letter sounds like before Preschool/Kindergarten, but they will be able to recognize these letters when they are

¹⁰ Ibid.

later introduced in school. Children that have the background knowledge of the alphabet will be able to more quickly pick up on the sound of the alphabet and then in turn be able to start reading quicker.¹¹

In addition to being engulfed in a literacy-rich environment, a key concept that teachers focus on when bringing literacy into their classroom, especially in the younger grades, is comprehension. A student must not only be able to read, but understand what was read as well. One way parents can help with comprehension, is by asking their children questions about things they experience. For example, if a child is watching a television show with their parents, the parents should ask the child to give a summary during the commercial breaks of what's been happening in the show.¹² Parents can also ask their child to go into detail about what they did at school that day, or explain any billboards they may have seen on their way to the store. All of these will help build a child's ability to draw on information they just acquired and do not require any money to be spent on books or literacy games. If a child is able to comprehend and summarize information about a TV show or their day, then at school he/she has the ability to apply these same skills when reading.

According to PBS, "You can look for bargain children's books at used book stores and yard sales, or purchase books at great prices through monthly book clubs offered through child care centers or schools."¹³ There are a plethora of resources

¹¹ K. (2017, June 16). Prepare your child for kindergarten by teaching them the alphabet. Retrieved from <https://www.giftofcuriosity.com/prepare-your-child-for-kindergarten-by-teaching-them-the-alphabet/>

¹² Use TV to Improve Reading Comprehension. (2017, February 22). Retrieved from <http://www.readingspotlight.com/tip/using-tv-to-develop-reading-comprehension/>

¹³ How to Create a Literate Home: Young Child and Kindergartner. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-tips/how-to-create-a-literate-home-young-child-and-kindergartner/>

available out there, such as the local library. Parents can ask for donations of books that are outdated or going to be thrown away. Often these books are just slightly worn, or have writing in them and they are deemed “unusable” or old by the library, but are still plenty usable for an emerging reader.¹⁴

Parents are not the only adults in a child’s life who can help provide an opportunity for a literacy-enriched background but teachers also play a huge role in students’ literacy experiences, especially those who work in low SES schools. Knowing what data says about reading and school readiness, teachers must fill their classroom with a plethora of books. This is on top of the task of using their own money to purchase other supplies that teachers in most high-socioeconomic schools simply get handed to them, including writing utensils, paper, and art supplies. With these seemingly unfair financial realities, we have witnessed a multitude of ways in which teachers in low SES schools still introduce literacy into their classroom and their students’ homes with little to no cost.

This is accomplished through introducing Book in a Bag programs into their curriculum. Book in a Bag uses leveled paper books that teachers supply for the students and then send home with the instructions for students to read the book one time every night to their parents/guardians. Teachers who have used Book in a Bag believe it will greatly help their students increase reader fluency, which is a huge part of being able to read. While the materials from the Book in a Bag comes from the teacher and the classroom, it provides an opportunity to bring literacy into their home. As

¹⁴Langdon, V. (2016, March 20). Librarians weed out books that are worn, out of date or unused. Retrieved from <https://dailygazette.com/article/2016/03/20/library>

previously stated, having literacy in the home will greatly help improve a student's reading ability. (student teaching)

Reading is a major component of a child's daily life in school, and it should be out of school as well. Whether a child is listening to a story, learning their letters, working on their comprehension, or actually reading a story themselves, they should be surrounded by literacy. Students who are exposed to literacy in and around their home and community come to school with an advantage that students who are not surrounded around literacy do not have. All children should be given this advantage and in turn a higher chance at succeeding in school. In low-socioeconomic status communities, books may be hard to come by. However, as stated, books are not the only way for a child to practice and build upon their literacy skills outside of school.

The lack of books and literacy experiences children in low-socioeconomic status communities receive is not the only problem these children face. The number of children that go to school every single day hungry is staggering. Nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of students, or 16 million children, go to school hungry every morning.¹⁵ These children are amongst the 46 million Americans that live below the poverty line or the 20.4 millions of families that live in deep poverty. A family in deep poverty only receives an income of \$11, 500 a year. Sadly, 7 million of our students fall into this category.¹⁶

Outside of teachers and school faculty, many Americans may believe that a student's hunger is not a concern in the classroom. This could not be more inaccurate. Not only do teachers care about the well-being of each and every student in their

¹⁵ Felling, C. (2013, May). Hungry Kids: The Solvable Crisis. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/Hungry-Kids@-The-Solvable-Crisis.aspx>

¹⁶ Ibid.

classroom, but coming to school hungry also affects a students' success. Share Our Strength interviewed teachers and they all agreed on one thing.

"The teachers whom Share Our Strength surveyed agreed that breakfast plays an especially crucial role in ensuring that students get a solid start to their days: Ninety percent said breakfast is very important to academic achievement. Ninety-five percent credited breakfast with increased concentration, 89 percent with better academic performance, and 73 percent with better classroom behavior. A majority (56 percent) said students who've eaten breakfast are less likely to be tardy or absent."¹⁷

Academic achievement, concentration, academic performance, and attendance are all key factors to a student's success in school. All four of these factors are improved when students come to school with a full stomach. These areas are all affected when a student continuously comes to school hungry for multiples reasons. When children are hungry, they are more likely to be tired or become ill. This leads to a lack of concentration, or even time spent out of class in the nurse's' office.¹⁸ Children that come to school hungry may also have a hard time succeeding in school which affects their academic achievement and performance, because they sometimes spend more time thinking about their next meal than they do on the concepts being taught.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Felling, C. (2013, May). Hungry Kids: The Solvable Crisis. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/Hungry-Kids@-The-Solvable-Crisis.aspx>

¹⁹ Ibid.

While a majority of students who come to school hungry live below the poverty line in low-socioeconomic status communities, there are still ways adults in their lives can combat child hunger.

“The No Kid Hungry campaign has been helping communities overcome these barriers. One solution is to move school breakfast out of the cafeteria and make it part of the school day. Innovative breakfast models like Breakfast in the Classroom (which makes healthy breakfast items available to all students in classrooms at the beginning of homeroom or first period) and Grab 'n' Go breakfasts (easy-to-eat items students pick up to munch in class) go a long way toward increasing participation.”²⁰

This campaign allows students to easily access food early in the morning before and during school. Moving the school breakfast outside the cafeteria is beneficial in overcoming pride that some students may have. Students and families may not want to admit that they are struggling to put meals on the table, but having programs bring food around to the classrooms gives students the opportunity to eat with their classmates, instead of the select few that are hungry having to get up and go to the cafeteria to eat breakfast. This also keeps students in the classroom, and then students will not have to miss valuable time in the class or miss new concepts that may be taught in the morning.

Some schools in low-socioeconomic communities may not be able to afford to bring in programs such as The No Kid Hungry campaign. However, teachers can still help combat child hunger on their own. Even though teachers that work in low-socioeconomic status school districts are not given many funds to help their students,

²⁰ Ibid.

teachers usually still find a way to help their students. Teachers have access to the internet at school, whereas some families living below the poverty line may not. This gives teachers the ability to look up soup kitchens or food banks in the immediate area. Teachers can also offer rides to soup kitchen and/or food banks that may be further away keeping in mind that families living below the poverty line may not own a vehicle. Teachers do not always have to give up their paycheck to make sure every single one of their students are living comfortable, even though most do. They can offer their time, guidance, and assistance in any way the family needs, but also making sure they are not being insensitive.

Whether teachers give their time, guidance, assistance, or in some cases money, we cannot just do nothing as educators. "A Midwestern teacher noted, "The saddest are the children who cry when we get out early for a snow day because they won't get lunch" (Share Our Strength, 2012)." ²¹ Children coming to school hungry is a growing epidemic that not only affects their immediate health, but also their education now and in the future. Students that receive assistance and are given food in the morning to eat for breakfast receive 17.5% higher on standardized tests. As stated, coming to school hungry also has an effect on a student's future education. Students who are fed before school or when they first arrive at school are 20% more likely to graduate high school, and having roughly \$10,000 more in income yearly as an adult. ²²

Parents have the ability to help their children as well receive a meal before heading off to school every morning. Websites such as:

²¹ Felling, C. (2013, May). Hungry Kids: The Solvable Crisis. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/Hungry-Kids@-The-Solvable-Crisis.aspx>

²² Ibid.

www.homelessshelterdirectory.org, Feeding America, and www.foodpantries.org, provide information on where families can find local food pantries, soup kitchens, and food banks.²³ If parents do not have access to the internet in the home, they can use computers and the internet for free at the nearest public library. Nearly all U.S. public libraries offer it's community with free internet.²⁴

A major problem affecting students and teachers in low-socioeconomic status communities is the lack of school supplies. When students come to school they rely on and expect their teachers to provide them with a good education. However, when schools and communities are not/ cannot provide teachers will the materials they need to successfully teach a new concept this task of providing an excellent education can be daunting. A teacher apart of the Michigan school district said, "It's a challenge for the teachers in preparing to do the instruction, it's a challenge for the students who are expected to complete the tests and do the homework. It overall has a dramatic impact on...everyday teaching and learning."²⁵ Without appropriate supplies, not only can teachers not provide the education parents and students expect, but students cannot implement the new concepts in the classroom. It is affecting both parties--teachers and students.

²³ Find A Local Soup Kitchen Who Needs Your Help This Holiday Season. (2015, December 08). Retrieved from <https://www.wheelsforwishes.org/news/find-a-local-soup-kitchen/>

²⁴ Bertot, J., & Palmer, K. (n.d.). U.S. Public Libraries Provide Access to Computers, the Internet, and Technology Training. Retrieved from <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2005/06/Support-Needed-for-Library-Technology>

²⁵ Bohannon, L. (2017, January 20). Lack of school supplies affects schools throughout state. Retrieved from <http://news.jrn.msu.edu/capitalnewsservice/2017/01/20/lack-of-school-supplies-affects-schools-throughout-state/>

Teachers are very creative individuals, and there are many teachers who have mastered the art of creating and executing creative lessons without any support from their school or community when it comes to supplies. However, even if a teacher is able to create a lesson without many supplies, students are not able to then take the lesson any further.

If there is a lack of art supplies, students are unable to complete any sort of creative extension project to the lesson. All educators know how important it is to implement all different types of extensions to a lesson. Not every student in a class will learn the same way or be gifted in the same aspects. Some students are more artistic, and they should have the chance to use those skills in school. If there is a lack of textbooks, students who are linguistic learners will suffer. Most students cannot learn and truly grasp a new concept solely by listening to their teacher talk about it. Linguistic learners better understand new material by reading about it.²⁶ Therefore, if schools lack textbooks or have out of date textbook like some schools in low-SES communities, then these students would not have the opportunity to learn at their highest potential.²⁷ If schools lack projectors, students who are visual learners will suffer. Visual learners learn best when they can see the new concept presented before their eyes.²⁸ This is usually done in a classroom using pictures and videos displayed on the board using a projector. Videos are very powerful for students, especially in the younger grades.²⁹ If schools lack manipulatives, kinesthetic learners will suffer. Kinesthetic learners learn

²⁶ Overview of Learning Styles. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/>

²⁷ Bohannon, L. (2017, January 20). Lack of school supplies affects schools throughout state. Retrieved from <http://news.jrn.msu.edu/capitalnewsservice/2017/01/20/lack-of-school-supplies-affects-schools-throughout-state/>

²⁸ Overview of Learning Styles. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/>

²⁹ Pedagogical benefits of video for teaching and learning @ UQ. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.uq.edu.au/teach/video-teach-learn/ped-benefits.html>

best by touching, using and feeling objects in front of them.³⁰ When a school lacks manipulatives, this is most detrimental to kinesthetic learners during any math lesson. “Manipulatives are concrete objects that can be viewed and physically handled by students in order to demonstrate or model abstract concepts.”³¹ While manipulatives may seem like something only elementary schools in low-SES communities should be worried about, that is untrue. “In fact, for decades, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has recommended the use of manipulatives in teaching mathematical concepts at all grade levels.”³² Manipulatives help students connect different ideas together, and when students can make these connections they are able to think abstractly about a new concept.³³ When a school lacks the basic supplies, all students are affected. Whether a student is a linguistic, visual, or a kinesthetic learner, they are affected some way by a lack of some supply.

Parents, school staff, and especially teachers never want to see a child suffer academically in school, because of a problem that could have been avoided. Visual learners struggling because there is no projector, kinesthetic learners struggling because of a lack of manipulatives, and linguistic learners struggling because of a lack of textbooks can all be avoided if the school simply had the necessary supplies to help assist and accommodate every different type of learner. Donations are the key to the start of the fix of this problem. When we started our project of the winter baskets, it was

³⁰ Overview of Learning Styles. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.learning-styles-online.com/overview/>

³¹ Why Teach Mathematics with Manipulatives? (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.hand2mind.com/resources/why-teach-math-with-manipulatives>

³² Ibid.

³³ Why Teach Mathematics with Manipulatives? (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.hand2mind.com/resources/why-teach-math-with-manipulatives>

brought to our attention how many large, chain stores are willing to donate school supplies.

Programs such as CCS and United Way also help provide donations for schools that have a lack of funds and cannot provide supplies for their classrooms.³⁴ The Kids in Need Foundation also helps distribute and provide schools and students located in poverty with supplies. The Kids in Need Foundation has School Ready Supplies program that directly gives students book bags full of supplies.³⁵ Principals, Superintendents, and even teachers can provide their school with supplies even if the community does not have the funds to by simply getting involved with these programs. These programs are donation based, and could provide their students with the supplies they desperately need to receive a fair and great education.

School supplies, reading materials, and food are not the only things that can affect children and their education. A lack of proper clothing during the winter season affects kids both in and out of school. When students are not wearing the proper gear to keep their bodies warm, it is detrimental to their health, which in turn influences their success in school.

“Health experts report that even a 2-degree drop in body temperature results in reduced heart rate, loss of coordination, and confusion. Adults cannot work effectively and children find it difficult to learn. For most, a warm coat solves the

³⁴ A kid can't learn without basic school supplies. There's still time to help. (2016, August 07). Retrieved from <http://www.standard.net/Opinion/2016/08/07/children-poverty-education-schoolsupplies-CCS-UnitedWay-editorial>

³⁵ School Ready Supplies Program. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.kinf.org/programs/srs/>

problem. But, for the nearly 15% of Americans living in poverty, a warm winter coat is a budget “extra.”³⁶

Students are stepping off the bus, walking to school, or playing at recess without a coat. In addition, gloves, hats and scarves fail to keep students protected. These are small articles of clothing that are often disregarded, and not seen as important in a low-SES family, they simply cannot afford them. The negative effects that the cold weather can have on children’s health, causes schools to create rules and policies that requires students without proper winter attire to stay in the office for their recess. That is a loss of time that is important to get kids moving.

Hats are critically essential to have in the cold weather season. Although our bodies have adapted ways to keep ways to keep warm, there is not a lot of fat or blood vessels that are able to constrict around the brain. According to Harvard health, “even if the rest of your body is nicely wrapped up, if your head is uncovered you’ll lose lots of body heat — potentially up to 50% of it”.³⁷ That being said, it is crucial that children wear hats in order to maintain optimal body heat. Scarves also help protect the neck and face. Although often seen as an “accessory” they are necessary. Sick Kids Health staff give advice on wearing winter accessories. They say, “Your head and neck are major sources of heat loss. A hat and a scarf are a must in cold weather. If you are worried about your child wearing a scarf, try a tube scarf. A balaclava or similar cover for the head, ears and face may be best in very cold weather.”³⁸ These articles of clothing

³⁶ The Need for Warm Coats. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.onewarmcoat.org/theneed/>

³⁷ Cold out? Why you need to wear a hat! (2012, February). Retrieved from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/cold-out-why-you-need-to-wear-a-hat>

³⁸ SickKids Hospital Staff. (2013, November 6). Dressing for the Cold. Retrieved from <https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=1940&language=English>

should be worn in any cold weather situation and for any duration. While walking to school, playing outside for recess or even just waiting to be picked up by bus or car, children need to always be wearing proper clothing and gear in the cold winter weather.

Personal Reflection: Elaine Shull

What a journey this project has been. I think back to when Kaileigh and I first started brainstorming this thesis and project. We were so excited and eager to make a difference. It feels wonderful looking back and seeing what we accomplished. After putting in many long hours, I can look back and say that I am proud. I am proud of myself for striving to do something bigger than myself. I am proud of Kaileigh for committing herself to this project alongside me.

Kaileigh was an outstanding partner. This project would not have been the same without her. I am glad that I chose to complete this journey with her. I had never planned to complete my senior thesis with another person, however, I could not be happier that I did. Choosing to work with a partner allowed us to accomplish much more than we would have been able to accomplish on our own. It allowed us to inspire and build ideas off one another. Although this is not a typical route, it was one I do not regret.

Looking back, my biggest surprise and hurdle of this project was the time that it took to complete. When we had first proposed our ideas, we were filled with lots of doubt. We were told there needed to be backup plans. However, nonetheless, we persisted, prayed and hoped. We dedicated ourselves to this project last Fall, and I am proud to say we surpassed our expectations and goals. Initially we were told that for a creative project, we should expect to spend at least 135 hours on it. Kaileigh and I most definitely surpassed that, not including all our research for our paper as well. The hours of emailing, phone calls, visits to Kidz Korner and local retailers, planning and researching...they added up quickly.

Although this project took more time than expected and we had to conquer a few hurdles, I can conclude knowing that I would do it all over again. As a future educator, and a member of the Muncie community, I have learned so much through this experience. As I was completing my student teaching this semester, I was immersed in a whole new environment, much different than the one I researched and experienced in Delaware county. I was teaching at a DoDEA school in on an Air Force Base in Ramstein, Germany. Teaching here, I knew that every single one of my students had at least one parent in the military. This meant, that every student has at least one parent with an income and health insurance and benefits for the family. My students were not coming to school burdened with the same ones that I had researched in low-SES communities. It was interesting to see this difference, and I was significantly more aware of them due to this project. I am ending now, with a new viewpoint of the world around me that I will forever continue to carry with me.

Two of the great lessons I learned from completing this honors project is resilience and social education. I learned resilience is crucial in this world and an important trait in accomplishing something. I had to learn to bounce back from setbacks in the most positive ways possible and making the most out of the situations that were presented to me. The lesson I learned about social education is to inform. It is important to inform both yourself and others of the context of the community and society around you. In order to best survive and thrive in your environment, you should educate yourself. Dive in, adapt, and become a part of it rather than standing naive on the outside.

Personal Reflection: Kaileigh Kramer-Stephens

I remember sitting on my dorm room bunk bed Freshman year talking with Elaine about how nervous I was to have to write an Honors Thesis come Senior year. Three years ago, I never would have thought I would be writing, researching, and creating my thesis alongside her. Working with a partner has made this experience that much better. Elaine and I both bring many different talents and tools to the table, and I do not think we would have accomplished everything we did on our own. Together we were able to organize a project that help serve 30 children, complete many hours of research over our own area of study, and compose an Honors Thesis.

Starting this Honors Thesis, Elaine and I were told how we needed to make sure we each spent at least 135 hours total on the research and the project portion of our thesis. At the time, I honestly was unsure where these hours would come from. However, we have equally spent well over 135 hours on research and our project. The end project, winter baskets, may not seem like many hours went into it. However, the planning, fundraising, and execution of the winter baskets took many hours every week for many weeks during the Fall semester of 2017.

The biggest struggle I personally came across while working on the project portion of the thesis was being able to balance helping children in the community and not interfering with people's pride. Reasonably so, some people do not want to receive handouts from complete strangers, or have college students tell them what their children need. This being the furthest thing from what Elaine and I were intending to do, we decided to base what we put in the winter baskets solely on our research. This is

one reason we spent an abundance of time researching exactly what items **all** children need to be successful in school.

The biggest struggle I came across while composing the written research portion of the project was intermingling my own knowledge of education, children, and different types of communities from courses I have taken while at Ball State with research I had found online. While most of the research I found matched what I had learned, it was difficult for me to actually find research before putting it in my paper. I would catch myself typing information without having any factual evidence to cite it with, and while I knew the information was correct I had to still go back and find sources. This also added to the workload of this thesis.

Completing my student teaching in Ramstein, Germany through DoDEA really helped emphasize the importance of this project. Coming from working in Muncie schools located in a low-socioeconomic community to student teaching through DoDEA showed me the difference a communities socioeconomic status truly has on its students. Students in DoDEA schools all had an abundance of school supplies and reading materials available for them. There was not only a large library, but also an entire reading room filled with books for students at every level. Every student had a least one working parent, and a snack time in the middle of the school day was a regular occurrence in every classroom. There was also three shelves full of extra coats, gloves, hats, and scarves for students to borrow if necessary. These students never had to worry about not having access to reading materials or school supplies. They hardly came to school hungry, and if they did they were fed, and they were always dressed appropriately.

From the start, this project impacted my life and my future career as an educator by showing me how each aspect of a child's life can impact their education, and as their adult role model and teacher I need to make sure to try to equip them with as many resources as I can while they are under my care. However, now ending the project student teaching with DoDEA, I have first-hand seen the impact these necessities can make on a child's life and education, and I am blown away by the difference I know we can all make in this field and the outcome it will have on these students.

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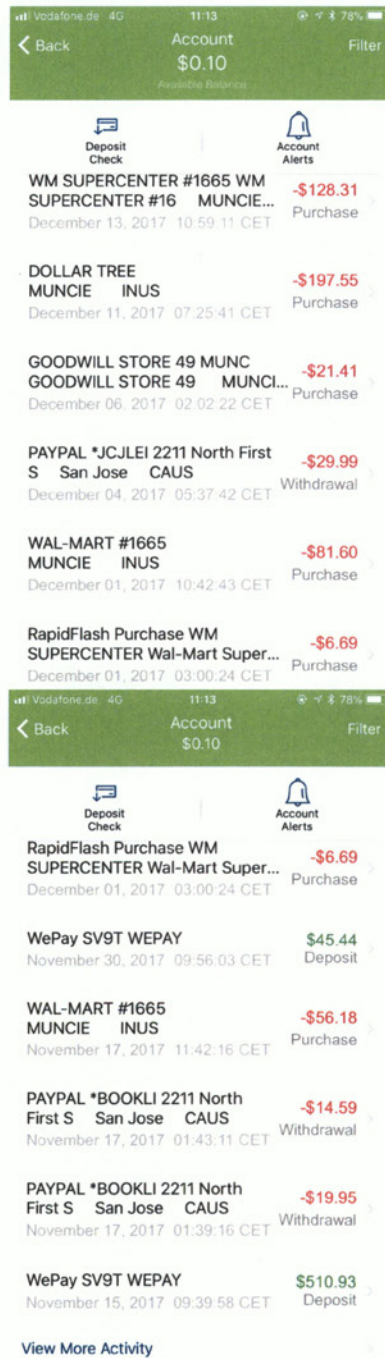
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Artifacts

Our fundraising page: www.gofundme.com/winter-baskets-for-students-in-need



Winter Baskets for Children

Thank you for your support!



You Made a Difference!

Each basket had a blanket, hat, gloves, scarf and a Christmas gift for each child. Each basket also included, soap, tissues, toothbrushes, toothpaste, coloring books, many reading materials, math flashcards, rulers, notebooks, maps, alphabet flashcards, shapes/color flashcards, school workbooks, and food. Each child age 4+ also received a pencil pouch that included: pencils, a glue stick, markers, colored pencils, pens, pencil grips, pencil sharpeners, crayons, and erasers. Families with toddlers and infants, also received diapers, baby wipes, baby powder and baby blankets.

With Love, Elaine & Kaileigh

"FOR A BSU IMMERSIVE HONORS PROJECT, BSU STUDENTS ELAINE SHULL AND KAILEIGH KRAMER-STEPHENS RAISED FUNDS FOR MUNCIE'S KIDZ KORNER, SENDING CHILDREN HOME WITH PERSONALIZED BASKETS OF TOYS, BOOKS, AND FOOD, A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF THE GENEROUS WORK OUR STUDENTS DO IN THE COMMUNITY. #BETTERTOGETHER"

-Geoffrey S. Means
Ball State President

"THANK YOU FOR THIS. MY GRANDDAUGHTER GOES TO KIDZ KORNER. MY DAUGHTER WORKS THERE AND MY WIFE WORKS FOR BALL STATE. THEY ALL WERE SO HAPPY AND THRILLED AT THIS. YOU HAVE SHOWN YOU REALLY DO CARE. YOUR ACTIONS BACK UP YOUR TALK."

-Duane Blair

"THE MOTHERS AND FAMILIES WERE SO GRATEFUL. THE KIDS WERE SO EXCITED THAT THEY COULD NOT GET OUT THE DOOR. THEY WANTED TO LOOK AT EVERYTHING IN THEIR BASKETS!"

-Sheila Scott
Director at Kidz Korner



We were able to create **25 full** baskets!

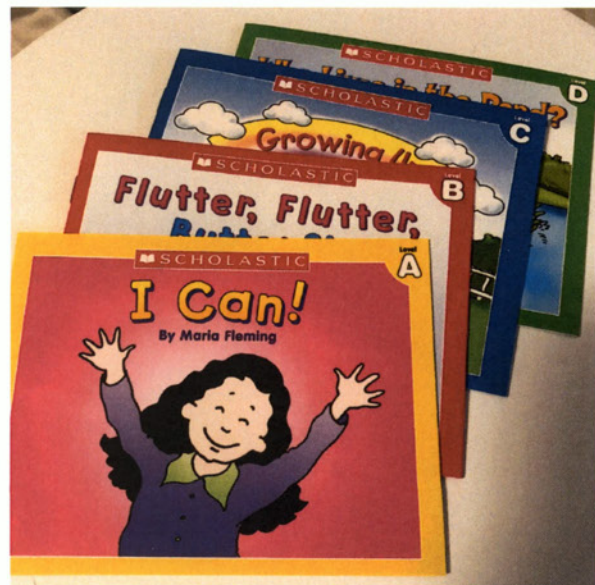
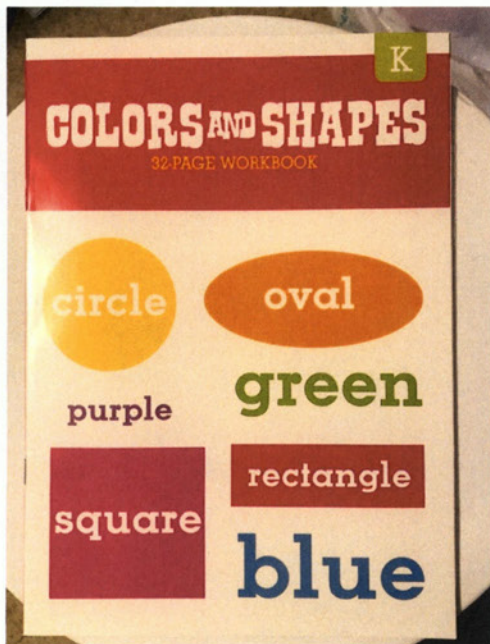


Each family received a personalized laundry basket, filled with winter & school necessities!



Pictured: Elaine Shull handing out a basket to one of the families. Their reactions: priceless.

The Baskets



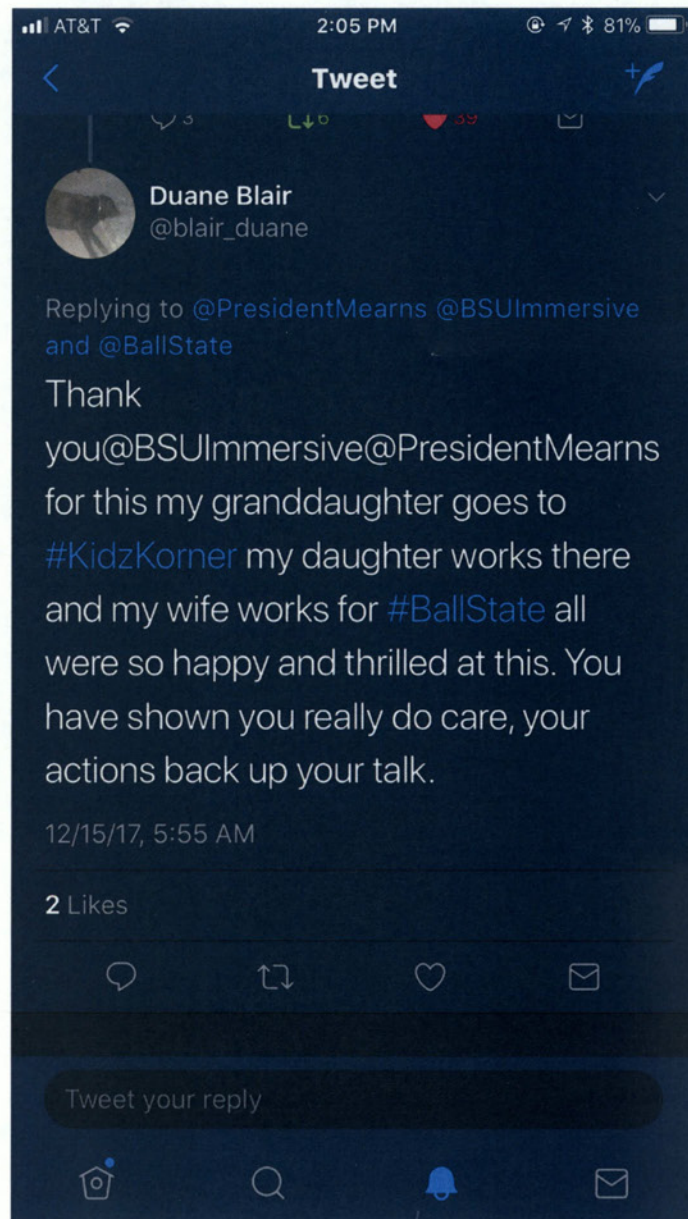
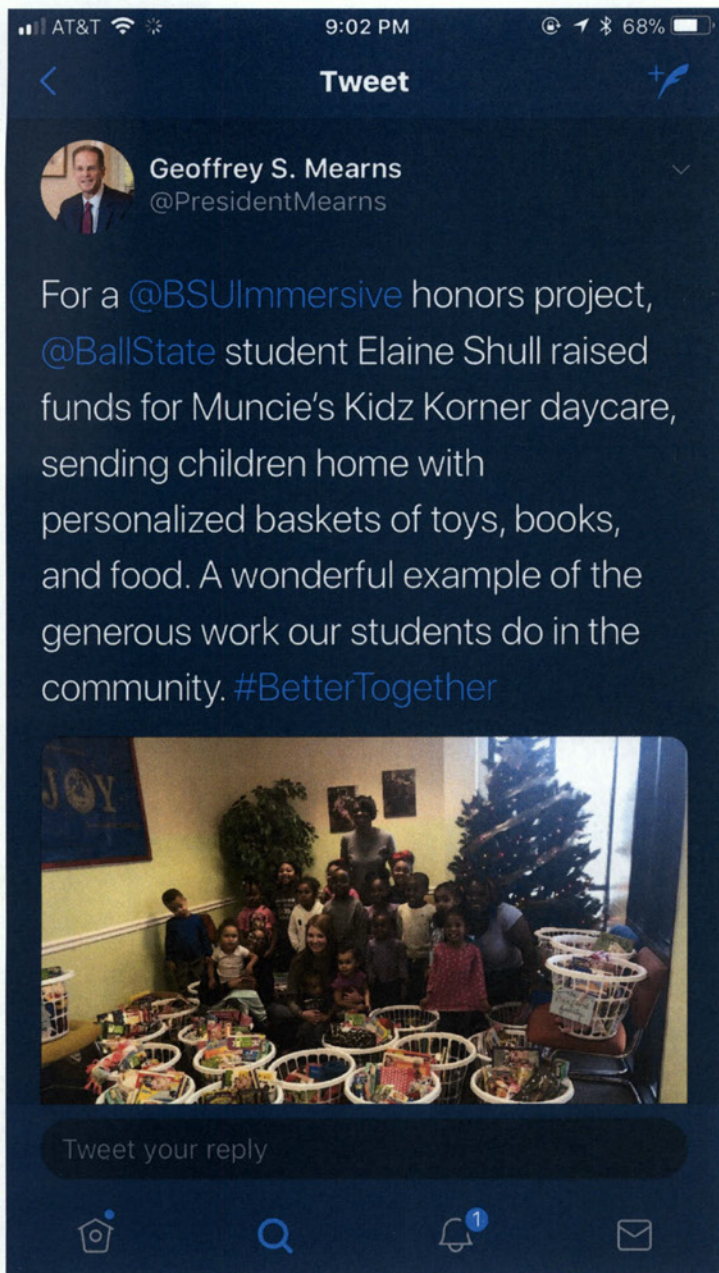






The Impact





- SA Stacey Allred
What you did was so timely with it being Christmas and so generous. Sheila and I met yesterday and she said the mothers were so grateful and the kids were so excited that they couldn't get them out the door. They wanted to look at everything in their baskets
- Stacey Allred
Am very proud!